



# Amisulpride for

## Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD)

(Pronounced ami-sul-pride)

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### Why has amisulpride been prescribed?

Amisulpride is an antipsychotic most commonly used to treat schizophrenia and some similar conditions. However, it is sometimes used in people with dementia experiencing behavioural or psychological symptoms where other measures have not worked.

### What are the benefits of taking amisulpride?

Amisulpride can be effective in reducing distress and can help you to feel more calm.

### Are there any precautions with amisulpride?

Amisulpride is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe amisulpride, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) If you suffer from heart or kidney trouble.
- b) If you have cerebrovascular risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, smoking, atrial fibrillation and previous stroke
- c) If you are taking any other medication, especially for Parkinson's Disease, antidepressants, mood stabilisers, medicines for high blood pressure and medicines to treat an irregular heartbeat. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines.
- d) If you are lactose intolerant as the tablets of both amisulpride and sulpiride contain lactose. However, the liquid preparation of both products do not contain lactose.

### What is the usual dose of amisulpride?

The starting dose for amisulpride is usually 25mg once daily. The usual dose of amisulpride is between 25-50mg daily. Some people may receive higher doses. It may take a few weeks to get to the dose that is most suitable.

### How should amisulpride be taken?

Amisulpride is usually taken once or twice a day.

### What form does amisulpride come in?

Amisulpride is available as tablets and liquid. Amisulpride tablets are available as 50mg, 100mg and 200mg. The liquid is 100mg per 1ml.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the usual dose the following day. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

## What will happen when amisulpride is first taken?

Amisulpride may produce some noticeable effects within a few hours. To begin with it can help some people to feel more calm and relaxed. However, like many medicines, it may take several days or weeks for the full effects and for some symptoms to improve. However, some people may experience side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0800 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Is amisulpride addictive?

No, amisulpride is not addictive. However, if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings.

## What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking amisulpride should not drink alcohol. This is because both antipsychotics and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make psychosis worse. However, once people are used to taking medication, then *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

## Is it OK to stop taking amisulpride when symptoms go away?

Amisulpride is usually only used for short periods in dementia and should be reviewed regularly. You should always discuss any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines with your prescriber.

## Are there any alternatives to amisulpride?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Overall, antipsychotics have broadly similar therapeutic effects but differ in their side effects. With the range of medicines now available, a suitable and acceptable antipsychotic can usually be found for everyone. Other non-drug treatments that are person-centred can help. Paracetamol for pain can be very beneficial for some people. Reminiscence, music and dance therapy can be effective.

## Summary of side effects



### Insomnia – Common

#### What can be done about it?

Discuss with your prescriber. The time of your dose may need to be changed or the dose may be reduced initially. Sometimes a sleeping tablet might be prescribed for a short while.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Loss of sexual desire (men and women)	<b>Uncommon</b> Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Impotence (men) - difficulty in getting an erection	<b>Uncommon</b> Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Swelling of breasts and breast milk production (men and women)	<b>Uncommon</b> Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Movement disorder - trembling, muscle spasms.	<b>Uncommon</b> Another medicine may be prescribed to treat this. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Agitation and anxiety (sometimes called akathisia)	<b>Uncommon</b> Discuss with your prescriber. These feelings may reduce and wear off over time.

	It may be necessary to prescribe another medication or an alternative can be prescribed.
Weight gain	<b>Uncommon</b> Some people put on a few pounds. Try to eat healthily and take exercise.
Abnormal movements (sometimes known as tardive dyskinesia)	<b>Rare</b> This occurs only after long term treatment. It usually begins with unusual movements of the tongue and mouth. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which is less likely to cause this side effect. Symptoms may go away when switched to another medicine.

Very common = almost everyone affected  
Common = many people affected  
Uncommon = some people affected

Rare = few people affected  
Very rare = very few or no one affected

**In older people with dementia, there is an increased risk of stroke with antipsychotic drugs. Stroke is a medical emergency. The FAST test can help you recognise the signs.**

**Facial weakness:** Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

**Arm weakness:** Can the person raise both arms?

**Speech problems:** Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

**Time to call 999:** if you see any of these signs.

## Disclaimer

This leaflet does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit [www.slam.nhs.uk/meds](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/meds) or speak to a health care professional.

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